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FILES — THE MAKING OF OUR MOTHER TONGUE

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THE
MAKING OF OUR MOTHER
TONGUE,

BY

P. GILES, M.A., LL.D.

PETERHEAD :

PRINTED BY P. SCROGIE, "BUCHAN OBSERVER" WORKS.

1906.

The Making of our Mother Tongue,

BY

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Many thousands of years ago there lived on the continent of Europe a people which by and by was to play a great part in the history of the world. What name this people gave to itself we do not know, what manner of men its members were we do not know, no single word of its language is preserved. We do not know even the boundaries of its home—how far it spread to north and south and east and west. But somewhere in the great plain that runs across all Europe and half Asia this people were to be found, and men in modern times call it for want of a better name, the Indo-Germanic people.

The name is clumsy and ugly, and in a sense is unhistorical. For the name refers to a much later time when this people had lengthened its cords and strengthened its stakes and become not one people but many. It did what has been done elsewhere. In America one stock till the arrival of Columbus and his Europeans was found throughout the whole continent, from the snows of the Yukon to the torrid heats of Panama, and again from Panama to the Strait of Magellan. In the old world the tle was more complex, but in the course of ages this people had spread east, and no doubt after unrecorded struggles with Semites and Mongols had

reached Persia, and from there had passed into Northern India. North of the Black Sea the great Russian stock was forming ; into the southern peninsulas had passed the peoples that we know later as Greeks and Romans, and far in the west, pushing and struggling for room till they were faced by the boundless ocean, were the two peoples whose flesh and blood we are—the Teutons or Germans and the Kelts. Thus far these peoples had got at least 1000 years B.C. The different branches of the original folk had become far separated and lost even the memory that they were one people. But though this was so, the words that come from later stages in their respective languages make it quite clear that they all come from one original source. In all of them occur the same words for *father* and *mother*, in all of them the same words for *horse* and *cow* and *hound*, and for many other things, though as time goes on more and more changes take place, rendering the words less and less like one another. Just as in botany or zoology plants or animals become isolated and change till only the expert can recognise the relationship between them and the other members of their family, so in language the changes are often so great that it has required in modern times long and laborious investigation to prove any connexion at all.

For long the relationship of the Germanic peoples in the matter of language to other peoples was concealed by various strange changes that had taken place in their dialects. Greek and Latin and other languages agreed in using for *father* a word, which varying slightly from one language to another, may be fairly represented by *pater*, the Germanic peoples living between the Rhine and the Elbe, and extending down towards Central Europe call it *fader*. The other languages agreed to call the tooth by some word like the Latin *dens*, which we borrow in modern times to make words like *dental*. But part at least of the early Germanic peoples called it *tunthus*. The other languages agreed, in addressing a second person, to call him *tu* thou, our forefathers changed the *t* to *th* (*þ*) and called him *þu*.

There were a great many other changes of this kind. Large numbers of examples of these changes began to be collected about a hundred years ago, and a general statement was drawn up about them in 1822 by a great German scholar, called Grimm, and for this reason this statement has always since been called in this country "Grimm's Law."

Why did these people make these curious changes in their language? We cannot tell for certain. We may be quite sure that they were not conscious of making them. Though we are not certain as to the cause,

we may at least hazard a guess. It will be noticed that in modern times Germanic peoples live in a large part of the area which in the map is assigned to Keltic peoples. It is probably the fusion between Kelt and German that caused those changes. The Germans have occupied the soil of the old Keltic settlements; the Kelts have avenged themselves on the pronunciation of the Germanic languages. The first stage of these changes took place before the history of Northern Europe begins, and that stage was probably brought about, not by Germans overlapping Kelts, but by Kelts overlapping Germans. Both nations have always been prolific, and the whole history of modern Europe is only an account of their struggles to get more elbow-room. The Kelts have, in the course of their history, left few countries unvisited: about 390 B.C. they attacked Italy and Rome; a hundred years later they made an inroad into Greece, and even passed over into Asia, where, three hundred years later, St Paul found them, under the name of Galatians, as difficult to manage as if he had been an English bishop in an Irish diocese. Whether it was in connexion with this great migration of the Kelts that these changes came about in the Germanic languages we are not quite sure, but at any rate the change of *pater* into *fader* and the like, had taken place by about 200 B.C. Many centuries later when the Germans spread down over the Keltic area, a second series of changes came in, which makes the difference between modern German and modern English, which makes the German say *sapf* for the English *tap* and *schiff* for the English *ship*. These changes only took place in southern Germany, and though fashion carried some of them a good long way northwards, some of them never reached the northern sea at all. Hence the low German, the vulgar dialect spoken all along the northern parts of Germany, is much more like English than the book German which is founded upon a southern dialect. If Luther, who really made the modern German language, had chosen to translate the Bible into a northern instead of a southern dialect, the acquiring of German would not have been so difficult a matter as a good many Englishmen find it.

It is with Julius Caesar that the written history of Western Europe begins. The Greek sailors had been round these shores before in their search for tin and for amber, but no foreign power had tried to include the wild northern nations in its Empire. In a series of campaigns extending over ten years (58-49 B.C.) Julius Caesar annexed the greater part of what is now France to the Roman Empire. He even found time to make two short expeditions into Britain. At that time southern

England was a very different country from what it is now. The ancient Britons, though they painted their skins, were not absolute savages ; but the country generally speaking was left by them much as Nature made it ; great forests and great fens occupied a large part of its area. The inhabitants that Caesar saw were people of the same race and speaking the same language as the Welsh. As yet the country was Britain, it had not yet become England, the land of the Angles. Caesar made no permanent conquest. Almost a hundred years later, the Emperor Claudius set about annexing Britain in all earnest to the Roman Empire. The Kelt has always been a good fighter and the Romans found the conquest no easy task. But the trained soldier, if well led, has always an advantage over the untrained horde, and in less than half a century the Romans were the masters of the country everywhere, except among the mountains of the north and of the west.

It is to this period that we owe the first account of the inhabitants of Eastern Scotland. Tacitus, the Roman historian, was the son-in-law of Agricola, the Roman general who first penetrated to the north. Agricola made no permanent conquests in this country, but in a couple of sentences Tacitus tells us that the Romans were struck by the difference between the Caledonians and the Silurians of Wales ; the latter were dark, the former tall men with red hair, a fact which Tacitus thought proved their German descent. So stated, Tacitus' conclusion is probably incorrect. Modern ethnologists describe the Germans as yellow-haired, the Kelts as red-haired. But the ancients, as a rule, fail to note the difference though Diodorus speaking of the Galatae of Gaul, tells us that their children were born with the white hair of old men, a description which, however inexact, was probably intended to describe the fair hair of a German race.

In these tall red-haired people described by Tacitus others have seen the Picts, who in later centuries are found occupying the same area. Perhaps on no other question, unconnected with religion, have so much paper and ink been wasted on futile theories as on the origin and language of the Picts. The subject has been discussed at length in an elaborate memoir by Professor Rhys in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland for May 9, 1892. In this memoir Professor Rhys argues that the Picts were of the same Iberian origin as the Basques of the Pyrenees, and that the scanty remains of their language show a combination of Basque and Keltic characteristics. It would be unbecoming for one who is not a specialist in Keltic scholarship to criticise

this paper, which is the work of a scholar whose native speech is Keltic, and who has devoted a lifetime to the elucidation of Keltic problems. But Professor Rhŷs is well aware of the many difficulties which beset the question and of the uncertainty of the results. It is sufficient here to say that the most feasible explanation of the peculiarities of Keltic syntax is to assume that they were produced under the influence of a language of a different type spoken by a people which preceded the Kelts in the areas later occupied by them, but that the evidence at present is hardly sufficient to show that Pictish is a dialect of this earlier language contaminated by Keltic elements. The analysis of the scanty remains of Pictish made by Professor Rhŷs implies a mixture of different elements to which amongst living European languages Albanian alone would supply a parallel. Nor is the comparison of Basque (which possesses no records earlier than the sixteenth century) with Pictish of nearly a thousand years earlier likely to be satisfactory, so long as no investigation of the ancient Iberian inscriptions, which have been edited by Hübner in a large volume, has been made. In them it is possible that Basque elements some hundreds of years older than the Pictish remains may be found. But at present no one can say. That Professor Rhŷs is not convinced of the finality of his own analysis is shown by the fact that in the book entitled *The Welsh People*, published by him and Mr Brynmor-Jones in 1900, the Pictish language is still held to be of a non-Aryan stock, but its connexions, according to a theory of Prof. J. Morris Jones set forth in Appendix B, are to be found not in Basque but in the Berber of Northern Africa. On the other hand some ethnologists identify these tribes racially as of the Indo-Germanic or Aryan stock. In any case the red-haired Caledonians are not likely to have been the Picts, if any reliance may be placed upon tradition. For if northern tradition is consistent in anything, it is in the statement that the Picts or Pechts were a short, dark people. Mr Watt in the *History of Aberdeenshire*, p. 16, quotes from the account of St Manire in the Aberdeen breviary to show that in the ninth century there was still a wood folk addicted to old superstitions, and speaking a language or dialect differing from that of the low country, and of most of the Christian teachers. It is probable, therefore, that in ancient Caledonia, just as in ancient Gaul, there were two stocks intermingled, a short dark race and a tall red-haired race—the red Kelt and the black Kelt. The results, however, in the two countries have been different. The tall red race has been absorbed by the black short race and has disappeared from France, while

the Scotch remain one of the tallest races in Europe, though on the East Coast with but a small percentage of red hair.*

For more than three hundred years the Roman hold upon Britain never relaxed. From that occupation dates the use of a few words upon the soil of Britain. Of these the most noteworthy are: *Saturni dies*, "Saturday"; *culter*, *sutor* (Old English, *sutere*); *fuller* of cloth (Latin, *fullo*, Old English, *fullere*); *lacus* (Old English, *lacu*, "lake"), which, in the Northern dialect was replaced by the Keltic *luh*, "loch"; *mons* or *munt*, "hill"; *portus*, "port." By the 4th century A.D., however, the Roman empire was rapidly falling into decay. Its population was decreasing at an alarming rate. All along its northern frontier it was being pressed by those energetic and prolific tribes who poured in countless thousands from the forests of North and North-Eastern Europe upon the hapless Roman Empire. Once more it was the old need for elbow-room, and the barbarians by this time had discovered that Rome was not invulnerable. So greed combined with necessity to tempt the northern hordes to make an onslaught on the Empire. But clearly this must be the work of the tribes next her frontier in the first instance. From the shores of the North Sea and the Baltic it is a far cry to Rome. The tribes on those coasts were in no position to penetrate to the heart of the Empire. But like some of their northern descendants, who are supposed to cast longing eyes upon another empire, they recognised that "their future lay upon the water". They turned pirates, and they soon became a terror to the English Channel. From about 364 A.D. the Roman Government of Britain had to calculate in its budget for the expense of works of defence against those terrible pirates. A special officer was appointed to deal with them, who was called the Count of the Saxon shore. He had a good deal to do, and he appears not to have been very successful. The Romans were not able to keep these pirates from interfering with the Channel trade; they were not able even to prevent them landing and plundering town and country on the borders of the North Sea and the English Channel. To this period belong the great Roman defensive works, the remains of which may still be seen at Brancaster in

* Mr Lang is justified in making merry (*History of Scotland*, vol. i., p. 493) over the decipherment of an inscription which is read X TIOCHETTS: AHEHHTMNN: HCCVVEVV: NEHHTONN. One of the most competent of native scholars, Dr Macbain of Inverness, discusses the Pictish problem in an able excursus to his edition of Skene's *Highlanders of Scotland* (1902) pp. 387ff. He holds that Pictish was an independent Keltic dialect, and summarily rejects Prof. Rhys's view.

Norfolk, built to keep, if possible, the pirates from penetrating up the Wash and along the Ouse and its tributaries.

In another forty years the Empire became so weak at its heart that of necessity it must withdraw its soldiers from Britain altogether. If it was not to perish utterly it must concentrate its forces more. And so it came to pass that in 410 A.D. the Romanized Britains of Southern England were left to fight their battles by themselves. And it was not only the German pirate they had to fear. Ever since the Romans had been in Britain they had been harassed from the north by peoples called Caledonians and Picts. The Romans at different times had built walls from sea to sea to break the force of these invasions. A wall between the Firth of Forth and the Firth of Clyde was tried, and another between the Tyne and the Solway. But the Picts were not to be denied. In spite of walls and forts they made their raids just the same.

A happy idea struck the sorely tried Southern Britons. They would set a thief to catch a thief. They employed the German pirates to beat back the Picts. As a reward the Britons allowed these pirates to settle in the Isle of Thanet, which in those days was divided by about a mile of sea from the mainland. No doubt they devoutly hoped that Pict would kill German and German Pict, till their fate was that of the proverbial Kilkenny cats. But their hopes belied them. The Pict was driven back and the pirate realised what a goodly land Britain was. He would not allow the Pict to eat up the helpless Briton, he would eat him up himself.

By this time a new element appears amongst the invaders from the north. These are the Scots who from henceforth, till the Picts disappear from history, are always combined with them in the Chronicles. Whenever a raid is recorded upon Southern Britain from the north, it is declared to be the work of the Picts and the Scots. These latter, according to our records, were emigrants from the North of Ireland. Throughout the early middle ages considerable vagueness prevailed as to where *Scotia* really was situated, as to whether it was Ireland or North Britain. This vagueness led sometimes to no small disturbance on the Continent, where there were so many monasteries both of Irish Scots and British Scots. Hence the greatest of mediæval philosophers is generally characterised in a hybrid compound, half Keltic, half Latin, as the "Irish born"—*Scotus Eriugena*.

The emigrants spread over central Scotland from Argyllshire, where they first landed, and where, in those days, there could not have

been much to tempt them to stay. But the common notion that they ultimately extinguished the Pictish people on the north-eastern coasts is improbable. No doubt in a later age they gave their name to the whole country, but this result was achieved by their greater political influence and by the fact that Kenneth MacAlpine was fortunate enough to combine in his own person the royal rights of both Pict and Scot. All evidence goes to show that in Pictland inheritance was not through the father, but through the mother, and through this quaint law Kenneth the lawful heir, according to the ordinary rules of descent, to the Scottish Throne, fell heir also, through the female line, to the crown of the Picts.

In the campaigns when Saxons and Britons were matched against the peoples from the north, the Scots seem to have played a large part. Nennius tells us that Hengist, the Saxon leader, offered to Vortigern, the British king, that he would send for his son and his brother to fight against the "Scots and the people who dwell in the north, near the wall called Guaul." This is no doubt the Roman Wall between Tyne and Solway, for that between Forth and Clyde was apparently not long held by the Romans, and the Picts had long since swarmed to the south of it. The history of the more northern wall, along part of which the North British railway between Edinburgh and Glasgow now runs is extremely obscure, but probably it was not held by the Romans after 200 A.D., for the large number of coins found recently at Gartshore all date either from Antoninus Pius or Marcus Aurelius, the Emperors of the latter half of the second century. Vortigern accepted the Saxon's offer and accordingly Ochta, Hengist's son, and Ebissa, Hengist's brother, came with forty ships. "In these they sailed round the country of the Picts, laid waste the Orkneys, and took possession of many regions even to the Pictish confines." Such is the first account of the first recorded landing of a Teutonic or Germanic people on the shores of north-eastern Scotland.

In the invasion of Southern Briton three tribes we are told took part, the Jutes, the Angles, and the Saxons. The accounts which are given of their settlement in England are drawn almost entirely from the Venerable Bede who lived at Jarrow on the Tyne about two hundred years after the settlement took place. Mr Plummer, the most recent editor of Bede's historical work—the *Historia Ecclesiastica*—complains not without reason that modern historians make their statements more definite than the information which they derive from Bede warrants. He has considerable justification for his remark that J. R. Green in his

Making of England writes as if he had been present when the settlement was going on. As a matter of fact, Bede's own information must have been largely drawn from tradition, a very uncertain guide after the lapse of two hundred years, and this information has never yet been satisfactorily tested by the facts that can be derived from the history of the countries whence the settlers came. According to our information the Jutes came from what is called Jutland, though they did not speak a Norse dialect like the modern Danes. They settled mostly in Kent. The Angles came from Sleswick, from the district that is still known as Angeln. They made for the Eastern coast and pushed inwards to Central England up the rivers that flow towards the East. It is possible that earlier than this Frieslanders had settled in the district between the Forth and the Humber. Of all the English dialects the Northumbrian is the closest to Frisian, the records of which, unfortunately, do not go farther back than the thirteenth century of our era. The Angles occupied what is still known as East Anglia and there broke into two portions, the North folk and the South folk, whence we get the county names of Suffolk and Norfolk. But the whole of the settlers from Suffolk to Lothian claimed for themselves the name of Angles, though it is easy to see that, however dense the population of the Continental Angeln had been, it must have had many reinforcements from other quarters before it could have effectively occupied such an extensive area as the East Coast, from the Forth to Suffolk. The Angles came bag and baggage, leaving their own country desolate as, according to Bede (*H.E.*, i. 15), it still remained in his time. The Saxons came only partially. Those who came seem to have come at least partly from what is now Hanover. They settled south of the Angles and round the Jutes. We have their names still in the county names Essex, Middlesex, Sussex. Except in Thomas Hardy's novels, Wessex has disappeared, but the area represented now by Hants, Dorset, Wilts, and Somerset became the land of the West Saxons. It was the Saxons who did most in pushing back the Keltic Britons towards the west, and hence to the Keltic peoples the English-speaking folk have been the *Sassenach* to this day.

The making of southern Britain into England was a long task. Unfortunately our information as to how it was done is extremely scanty. But the Britons were steadily driven back towards the west, into the fastnesses of Cornwall, Wales, and Cumbria. Modern Welsh is of course the lineal descendant of the language of these ancient Britons, the Welsh

are the lineal descendants of that people. Even some of the old names remain. A name like Cradock, the Welsh Caradoc, is the same as that of the great chieftain Caratacus of the first century A.D.

Did the ancient inhabitants entirely disappear from the districts colonised by the Teutonic peoples? Professor Freeman and Mr J. R. Green always contended that, like the ancient Israelites, the newcomers hewed their enemies in pieces and left not one remaining. But this is not probable. As pirates they had made much money by selling slaves; they were not likely to close their eyes to the main chance now. Even if they massacred the fighting men, they would find the women and children too useful to treat in the same way. And this consideration is strengthened by another which the ethnologists, have lately emphasised. The Welsh are a dark people. These newcomers were a fair people. But to this day, in some of the Eastern counties, *e.g.*, Bedford, the people are darker on the average than they are even in Wales. How can this be, unless a large section of the earlier population survived?

Yet the number of words taken over from the Keltic inhabitants by the new settlers was small. In the early history of English the most important Keltic words are *brocc* "badger," *hogge* "pig," *ass*, *bratt*, "mantle, apron," *mattoe*, *dunn*, "brown" (the same as Don in Keltic river names), *cradol* "cradle," *dun* "hill," *cumb* "combe," *rocc* "rock," *dennu* "den," *luh* "loch."

Southern Britain as far as the Forth has now become England, and English not Welsh is its language, at least on the eastern side. In the great central peninsula on the West of England, Welsh to this day is strong; it has long ceased in Cumberland and the district in Scotland connected with it in early times; but a few people could still speak the ancient Keltic of Cornwall a hundred years ago. The coming of the English had put civilisation back in the island. The newcomers were heathen, and in every respect less developed intellectually than their predecessors. In 597 A.D., a hundred and fifty years after the invasion, Pope Gregory sent Augustine to convert the Saxons to Christianity. Augustine met with great success. But there were many independent little kingdoms, and it was a long time before they were all converted. When converted, however, they took their religion seriously, and a large part of the Old English (or Anglo-Saxon) literature consists of religious works, translations or paraphrases of the Bible, and devotional books. The first English poet—Cædmon—sings not of the myths of his own race, but of the story of early man as recorded in Genesis. Poems,

no doubt, the English brought with them, though *Beowulf*, the oldest extant, is preserved to our day only in a manuscript of the tenth century. These poems were handed down by recitation; no reading public existed. It was King Alfred, who died in 901 A.D., that first developed an English prose style.

As three tribes took part in the conquest so we might expect to distinguish three dialects in the language. There are, however, four dialects, for the Mercians of the central counties north of the Thames, though lumped together with the Angles by Bede, spoke a distinct dialect. These dialects are, therefore, proceeding from north to south, (1) Northumbrian, (2) Mercian, (3) Kentish, (4) West Saxon.

(1) The Northumbrian dialect was spoken between the Forth and the Humber, for it was many centuries after this before the boundary between Scotland and England was drawn at the Tweed. When English came into England it had a number of cases and declensions like Latin. Northumbrian lost these earlier than the other dialects, and hence Northumbrian, generally speaking, is easier to read than the other dialects. It is out of Northumbrian that the dialects of Yorkshire, Northumberland and Scotland have developed. As has already been mentioned, Northumbrian was closer to the language of Friesland than were the other English dialects, and it is interesting to observe that for centuries the connexion was kept up. It was the Northumbrian missionary Wilfrord that converted the Frisians to Christianity, and who ultimately became Archbishop of Utrecht. Wilfrid, the great Archbishop of York had also been in Frisia and consecrated in exile a Frisian, Suidbert, as missionary bishop of Frisia. The connexion of Frisia and Northumbria was broken by the invasion of the Danes. It is four hundred years later before we reach any Frisian records. But the close resemblance of this language to English can easily be seen from the following passage, which is a form of the Decalogue somewhat different from that to which we are accustomed :

From Hunsingo, north of Gröningen.

Hir is scriven alsa dene bode, sa god selua ief Moysi in Monte Synai, uppa tha berche Synai, on tuam stenena teflum; tha seclen wita allera monnalik, ther cristen send. Primum mandatum, thet erste bod: minna thinna god fore feder ende moder miith inlekere herta. Thet other bod: minna thinne euncristena

Literal Translation.

Here is written the commandments, even so as God himself gave [them] to Moses in Mount Sinai, on the mountain Sinai, on two stone tables; them shall all classes of men know, who are Christians. *Primum mandatum*—the first commandment: love thy God before father and mother with all thy (literally, inner) heart. The second commandment: love thy fellow (lit.,

like thi selwm. Thet thredde bod : fira
 thene sunnandei and there helche degan.
 Thet fiarde bod : minna thine feder end
 thine moder, hu thu longe libbe. Thet
 fife : thet thu thi nowet ne ower hore.
 Thet sexte : thet thu nenne mon ne sle.
 Thet sogende : thet thu nowet ne stele.
 Thet achtende : thet thu thi nowet ne
 ursuere, ne nen falesk withseip ne drine.
 Thet niugende : thet thu nenes thines
 eumeristena wiues ne gereie. Thet
 tiande : thet thu nenes thines eumeris-
 ena godes ne ierie.

even) Christians like thyself. The third
 commandment : keep the Sunday and
 the holy days. The fourth command-
 ment : love thy father and thy mother,
 that thou mayst live long. The fifth :
 that thou no whit break the marriage-
 bond. The sixth : that thou no man
 slay. The seventh : that thou nought
 steal. The eighth : that thou in nought
 forswear thyself, nor no false witness
 practise. The ninth : that thou covet
 the wife of none of thy fellow Christians.
 The tenth : that thou covet nothing of
 thy fellow Christian's.

The similarity to English is somewhat concealed by the confusion between *d* and *th* which appears, and also by the interchange of *g* and *i* (*i.e.* *y*) which is found in *ief* and *ieric*. But it could be turned with very few changes into Anglo-Saxon. The double negatives which are found in most of the commandments, and which, except in dialect, English has now abandoned, are of course as common in old and middle English as they are in Frisian. That Frisian is as intelligible to the modern reader as the earliest records of the northern dialect, even to northern men, will be seen from the following passage, which is probably among the earliest records of the Northumbrian dialect. It is inscribed upon the famous stone cross of Ruthwell in Dumfriesshire, and thus has not been liable to corruption by transcription. Fortunately there is a West Saxon paraphrase of the poem which is often attributed to Cædmon, the earliest of northern poets. Both versions are given by Dr J. A. H. Murray at page 20 of his invaluable treatise on the Dialect of the Southern Counties of Scotland. I give Dr Murray's literal translation. The parts missing on the Ruthwell cross are filled in from the West Saxon paraphrase—

On-gereðe him
 God almecchtig
 þa he walde
 on galga gi-stiga
 modig fore
 alle men
 buga ik ne darste

ahof ik riikne kyningk
 heafunes blafard
 hælda ik ni darste
 Bismærædu ungket men
 ba ætgadre

On-graithed him (self)
 God almighty
 when he would
 on the gallows ascend,
 strong-of-mood before
 all men.
 Bow I dared not.

[A reed I was reared].
 Upheaved I the rich king,
 Heaven's lord ;
 lean I dared not !
 Men reviled us two
 both together ;

Ik [wæs] mīþ blodæ bistemid
bi-goten of

Krist wæs on rodi.

hwēþræ þer fusæ

fearran cwomu

æþþilæ till anum

ik ƿæc al biheald

sare ik wæs

mīþ sorgum gidreced

Unag ic [hwēþræ]

Mīþ strelum giwundad

alegdun hīre hīnre lim-wærigne

gistoddun him æt his likæ's heafdum

bihealdun hīre þer heafan

I [wæs] with blood bestained
out-gushed from [the hero's side,
Since his ghost he had sent forth].

Christ was on rood ;

howbeit there hastily (fussily)
from-afar came

noble ones him alone (?)

I that all beheld.

Sore I was

with sorrows oppressed :

Inclined I yet

[to the hands of his servants.]

With shafts wounded,

laid they him limb-weary ;

stood (by) him at his lyke's head,

Beheld they there heaven['s lord].

(2) The dialect of central England was called Mercian. Unfortunately there is very little literature in it from early times. But from the fact that it was the dialect spoken in London, Oxford, and Cambridge, it is from Mercian that modern literary English has developed.

(3) The dialect of Kent was the most difficult but did not long survive for literary purposes, though Caxton tells us that even in his time at the very end of the fifteenth century, the people south of the Thames estuary did not clearly understand what the people north of it said, the Kentish folk *e.g.*, still saying *eyren*, where the men north of the Thames used the form *eggs*, which had been brought in by the Norsemen.

(4) The dialect in which most of the old English literature is preserved is that of the West Saxons. The reason for this has now to be explained. The part of England which, as far as we know, first developed a literature was Yorkshire. Cædmon and his successor Cynewulf are said to have both been connected with the great monastery which existed at Streanæs-halch now known to us as Whitby. But a great disaster fell upon this part of Britain. That disaster was the invasion of the Danes. Where the Danes came from is not altogether clear, for the first of them who came are called simply Northmen, and under that name were included Norwegians and Swedes as well as Danes in the modern sense. No doubt a large number may justly be called Danes, for curiously enough, they were descendants of settlers who had come from the north and fixed their abode in the old Angeln which had been left desolate by the removal of its inhabitants to England. Not less certainly a large number were the sons of Norwegian farmers along the sides of the Norwegian fiords, where the natural increase of the population very soon outruns the means of subsistence.

These people took a leaf out of the book of the Saxons four hundred years earlier and became pirates, though we know them under the more dignified name of Vikings. They settled in France, whence the name Normandy; they settled along the east coast of Ireland, and for a time in the western isles of Scotland. Hence to this day the Bishop is called the Bishop of Sodor and Man, Sodor being a corruption of the Norse words for South Isles, the name by which the Norsemen distinguished the Hebrides from Orkney and Shetland. Hence also the name of the county of Sutherland, which from the Scottish point of view is the north land, but to the Norsemen was a southern land. When, in the ninth century, the Norsemen descended upon the coasts of Northumbria, they swept away the greater part of the old civilisation and the literature. Thus it was that the Northumbrian literature would have been entirely lost, had it not already become popular in the south-west of England, which never suffered so much from the Danes and where consequently it was preserved in a form more or less approximated to West Saxon.

The area covered by the Danes in England is easy enough to trace by the place names. To say nothing of names which are more limited in area, wherever a place-name ends in —by, there, unless the name is a recent coinage, we are sure that there was a Danish settlement. Thus Streanæshalch became Whitby, in the north-west we have Kirkby, on the east coast Grimsby, down as far as Leicestershire, Ashby. But in Scotland only a few like Lockerby close to the Norse settlements in Cumberland, though there are some isolated instances in more northern counties (see a paper by Dr David Christison in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 1892-3, p. 278). The equally characteristic Norse —garth and —thwaite are almost non-existent in Scotland, entirely so north of the Forth; though the former has a parallel in the Keltic —gorth found in names like Crimondgorth, Auchnagorth.

The invasion of the Norsemen brought many common words into English; *take* for which the English was *nim*, *till* (Eng. *tə*), *egg* (Eng. *ey*). The Norse language had a very great influence upon the local dialects, and to this day the Northumbrian dialect is full of Danish words. Wherever the verb *gar* (compel) or the verb *bygg* (build) is found, there Norse influence is certain. Neither of these verbs has rooted itself in book English, although Spenser attempted to introduce the former in Elizabeth's time, this being one of the reminiscences of his residence for some time in Lancashire. Other words brought in by the Norsemen were *earl*, *carl*, *hæfene*, "haven" (earlier English *hȳp* "hithe"), *handfæstan*

(whence the marriage on trial called handfasting which survived so long in Scotland), *husbonde* "husband," *scale* (of a balance), *score*.

Till the Danish invasion apparently an active commerce was kept up between the English and the kinsfolk they had left behind on the Continent. But when the Norsemen seized the coast this traffic was no longer possible. Thus the connexion between the English and the Continent was broken. But something that was soon to happen was to break the connexion still more effectually. This event was the Norman Conquest.

The Norman conquest, as far as the language was concerned, had begun before William the Conqueror. Edward the Confessor had lived long abroad and loved the courtly Normans, so that Norman French was prevalent at his court. The Northmen had very little trouble in adopting another language. They adopted French in Normandy and English in England. In this some people have seen proof of their wonderful versatility. The explanation is probably simpler. The majority of these Northmen who settled in foreign countries were single men who married wives of the land. The result was that the next generation grew up knowing their mother's language better than their father's.

The Norman conquest had a tremendous influence upon English (1) by introducing new words, (2) by respelling the whole language. Every schoolboy knows that while *cow*, *sheep*, *swine*, are good old English words, *beef*, *mutton*, *pork*, are equally good Norman words. The old words remained because the English people for a couple of centuries became servants to Norman barons and minded their flocks and herds as we see in *Ivanhoe*. These herdsmen had to supply the meat for their lord's table, and had for this purpose to use words which would be intelligible to their lord. The respelling of the language has had the effect of divorcing it still more from its kindred languages on the other side of the channel in appearance and approximating it to French. In old English *gu* is never found before another vowel, hence *guard*, *guise*, *guide*, *guild*, *guest*, are all Norman words or spellings; *guard*, *guise*, are Norman words, *guide*, *guild*, *guest*, are Norman spellings for *gide*, *gild*, *gæst*.

The Normans had so much influence upon English because the great monasteries which they built were filled with Norman monks, and from among them came the scholars that made a study of the language. Norman William himself tried hard to learn so much English that no man need make his complaint to him through an interpreter. But a

contemporary assures us that he had not much success. Norman French remained for long the language of the Court, and it was the language taught in ladies' schools. This is the meaning of the phrase so often quoted (and so often misunderstood) from Chaucer of the Nonne a Prioress—

And French she spak ful faire and fetisly
After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,
For French of Paris was to hire unknowe.

It was a long time after the conquest—nearly three hundred years—before English recovered its rights. In 1362 the English Parliament ordained that in all law courts the English tongue should be used—"in any courts whatsoever, whether in the king's or other courts, before the king's justices or others." As time went on the French spoken in England got worse and worse, for, from the days of John onward, the tie with France was less close, and soon Englishman's French became a proverb, and its character, I fear, is not even now restored.

But all the time that the grand people were talking and writing French there were a large number of insignificant people engaged in writing the English tongue. The old dialects under the veneer of Norman French still survived. But in the middle of the fourteenth century their use in literature began to die out. The Kentish was the first to go and next after that the West Saxon, though it had been the book language of the last Anglo-Saxon period. The Midland dialect comes more and more to the front. It looked at one time as if through Piers Plowman, the West Midland, the language of the Malvern Hills was to become the literary language. But a greater than he arose in Chaucer who wrote the educated London dialect of his day, and from then to now that has been the literary dialect. But the other dialects were not dead. They are not dead even now, though the spread of education in all ranks is on the way to kill them.

Meantime the old Northumbrian dialect had entered upon a new lease of life because it had become the language of the northern kingdom of Scotland. As we have already seen the name of that country was transferred from Ireland. In the making of most nationalities there are many elements. Of Scotland this is not less true than of other countries. At a period long anterior to the Norman conquest we have seen that the Scots had occupied the western mainland of Argyll whence they had spread northwards and eastwards till under Kenneth MacAlpin they were amalgamated in one Government with the Picts who held the

eastern districts north of the Forth. The district from Tweed to Forth also we have seen was English, both racially and linguistically. The Picts of Galloway and the ancient British kingdom of Strathclyde were in process of time swamped by Scots, whose language survived in Galloway till a period comparatively recent. The Norsemen held Caithness and Sutherland and the Western Isles, and till the times of Alexander III. formed a permanent menace to Scotland. Out of these varied elements the Scottish nationality had to be formed, but the details of the process belong to history and concern us only in so far as they affect the development of a national language.

As Dr Hill Burton remarks, we are unable to trace satisfactorily the stages by which the predominance of the Scots was lessened till at last they occupied a position dishonoured and despised. All that we can see is that Saxon pre-eminence begins with the reign of Malcolm Canmore. In all probability the Court language of Malcolm and his predecessors from Kenneth MacAlpin downwards was Gaelic. The marriage of Malcolm with an exiled English princess seems immensely to have increased Saxon influence. As the higher civilisation of the Scots had assimilated the Picts, so in Malcolm's time apparently, the higher civilisation introduced by Queen Margaret and her numerous English followers usurped the place of the rougher Keltic civilisation which preceded it. From this time onwards the English language and a trading population of English-speaking men spreads steadily and rapidly along the eastern coast. Many attempts had been made to extend both English language and English conquests north of the Forth during the preceding four or five centuries. As far back as 685 A.D. the Saxon Ecgfrid had been defeated and slain at the great battle of Nechtansmere, probably Dunnichen in Forfarshire. Ecgfrid had aimed at an overlordship over the whole northern half of the island. By his death all such dreams were shown to be impossible of realisation, and in later centuries the arrival of the Danes gave the English plenty of employment elsewhere.

That, till about the period of Malcolm, the English tongue and the English population had not extended far beyond the Forth is shown by several considerations. Of these, perhaps the most conclusive is that when Queen Margaret, in 1074, wished to have what she considered abuses in the Church rectified, she found that the clergy could speak only in Gaelic, and her husband, Malcolm Canmore, who knew both English and Gaelic, had to act as interpreter. For Buchan we have the evidence

of the charters in the Book of Deer. These are all in Gaelic except the last, which dates from David I. and is in Latin. That the grants which purport to have been made to Columba and Drostan, should be made by people with Keltic names is only to be expected. But in the grant by David I., which brings us to the generation after Malcolm Canmore, the names of the witnesses are still of the same character. The bishops who are witnesses have Biblical or Church names, Gregory, Andrew, Samson. But what could be more Keltic than "Broccin and Cormac, Abbot of Turbruaid (Turriff) and Morgunn, son of Donchad, and Gillepetair, son of Donchad and Malacchin, and Matne's two sons," who witness the preceding gift by "Colbain, mormaer of Buchan, and Eva, daughter of Garnait, his wedded wife, and Donnachac, son of Sithech, chief of Clann Morgainn," in a document which belongs to the same reign? Nor are the other signatures to the grant in Latin less Keltic—Donchad, Earl of Fife, Malmor of Athol, Gillebrite, Earl of Angus, Gillecomded, son of Aed, Adam, son of Ferdornac, and Gillendrias, son of Matni, who along with Broccin and Cormac and the three bishops already mentioned, form the witnesses. There can be no doubt that Dr Stuart, in his preface to the Book of Deer (p. lviii.), is fully justified in his remark that "it is clear that the population and institutions of Buchan were wholly Celtic in the time of David I., and that the influences which led to a change in both must be traced to a later time, and to a concurrence of causes gradually working out their issues throughout the kingdom." If further proof were necessary, it could be supplied from charters granted by the great landowners to their sub-tenants. When, in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, William Cumyn, the first Earl of Buchan of that name, granted the lands and mill of Stratheyn and Kindrochet (Strichen and Kindrought), to Cospatrick Macmadethyn, the tenant bore a name which shows a decidedly Keltic origin. Three centuries later when the Sheriff Court Records of Aberdeen begin, such names have entirely disappeared from Buchan and seem confined practically to the uplands of the Dee and Don, where, for example, we find John and Donald Makincalzour combining with John Forbes "fear of Brux," and others with common names on 3rd April, 1505 to be sureties for the production of "Thome Coup before our soverane lords Justice . . . for the slauchter of Wat Makynreoché."

The steps by which the change from the Highland to the Lowland tongue took place in the eastern counties north of the Forth cannot be traced in detail because of the lack of documentary evidence. As we

have seen, in the history from Kenneth MacAlpin to Malcolm Canmore there is but darkness visible. A long procession of kings passes before us, which is hardly more substantial than that which emerged before the eyes of Macbeth in the witches' cave. In the succeeding period from Malcolm Canmore to Alexander III., the period which is all important for this and many other changes in Scotland, the torch of history burns but with a feeble ray. Amid the prevailing darkness a few important points can be detected. The coming of the English tongue was no doubt at first confined to the sea-coast, its trading towns and their vicinity. Before 1124 the towns of the north-east, Aberdeen, Banff, Elgin, Forres, Nairn and Inverness, had formed themselves into a miniature Hanseatic league. From these towns as centres, the language of the Sassenach spread.

But it was not only people of the Lothians who spread northward. The Scottish kings had themselves great estates in England and their Norman friends followed them to the north where they presently established themselves, Comyns, Byssets, Frasers, and many more, with surprising success, paralleled only by the achievement of Strongbow's followers in Ireland, also among a Keltic people. Nor were English and Normans the only people who came. When Henry II. expelled the Flanders traders from England, many of them migrated to the northern kingdom. Long ere this the kings, however Keltic in blood, had lost all touch with their kinsfolk of the north and north-west and found their kingly authority in those districts not even of nominal value. The Lord of the Isles looked upon himself, not as the subject, but as the equal of the King who ruled south of the Grampians. Hence Malcolm IV. no doubt was only too glad to settle a colony of Flemings in Moray, an early anticipation of the procedure followed by his remote successor, James I. of England, in the plantation of Ulster. Nor was it only in Morayshire that the merchants of Flanders were to be found. As Mr Watt says in his *History of Aberdeenshire* (p. 37) "they formed little settlements in many parts of the country, established trade and handicrafts, particularly weaving, and reclaimed waste land. One of these settlements was at Cruterstoun or Courtieston, in the parish of Leslie, named probably after a Fleming settler; and Flinder, still prominent among the place-names of the neighbourhood, is a further record of this medieval colony." Like European settlers in semi-civilized countries of the present day, these foreigners were for long entitled to the enjoyment of their own Fleming law. To this day the name of Fleming is not

uncommon, and perhaps, as appearing in the "Life and Death of Jamie Fleeman," is the most widely known of all Aberdeenshire names.

But it was neither Saxon nor Fleming merchants, nor Norman chieftains that converted the districts remote from the seaboard towns to the English speech. Something more drastic in its proceedings was the cause.

Throughout almost the whole of the thirteenth century the Comyns were the most powerful family in the north-east of Scotland, if not indeed in the whole kingdom. They were connected with the royal house, and John Comyn of Badenoch was one of the candidates for the throne, rendered vacant by the death of the Maid of Norway. When his claim was rejected, Comyn supported Baliol. This was the first of many grievances which embittered the house of Bruce against the house of Comyn so much that they must always be on opposite sides in the conflict with England. When Comyn, Earl of Buchan, as general of Baliol, invaded England, Carlisle Castle was held in Edward's interest by the father of Robert the Bruce, later King of Scotland. For this Baliol declared the estates of Bruce in Annandale "forfeited, and conferred them on the Earl of Buchan. Henceforth there was no goodwill between the Bruces and Comyns, though a dozen years were to elapse before their final conflict in Aberdeenshire" (Watt, *History of Aberdeenshire*, p. 59).

In 1308 the time of vengeance arrived. Robert the Bruce defeated the Earl of Buchan near Old Meldrum, and then proceeded to extirpate the Comyn influence. John Barbour, who was born within a generation of the event, and who, as parson of Rayne, had every opportunity to be well acquainted with the facts, sums up the whole history in a few pithy lines (*The Brus*, ix. 294-306):—

Now ga we to the King agane,
That of his victor wes richt fane
And gert his men burn all Bouchane
Fra end till end, and spard nane :
And heryit thame on sic maneir
That eftir that, neir fifty zheir,
Men menyit the heirship of Bouchane.
The King than till his pess has tane
The north cuntre, that hwmilly
Obeyisit till his senzory,
Swa that be north the Month var nane,
That thai ne war his men ilkane,
His lordship wox ay mair and mair.

Though the statement that "he sparit nane" may be taken with a grain of salt, it is significant, as has already been said, that when the court records of Aberdeen begin two hundred years later the names of the jurymen and parties to suits who come from Buchan are so characteristically Lowland. From the date of the Comyns' overthrow, no doubt the Lowland dialect has steadily advanced from the coast inland.

It has always to be remembered that the dialect now spoken in the north-eastern counties is an imported dialect which was originally uniform with the dialect, not only of Mearns, Angus, and Fife, but also with that which was spoken from Forth to Humber. It is in fact an English dialect, as presumably now every schoolboy knows, though nearly a hundred years ago Jamieson prefaced the first edition of his Scottish Dictionary with a long dissertation to prove that it was not. Jamieson, in fact, by this denial and by deriving Scotch words from Dutch, "Suio-Gothic," from anything but their real source, did much to retard a really effective study of the phenomena of the language which he had so well and laboriously collected in his Dictionary. That the dialect was English, indeed, hardly required to be proved, for no Scottish author earlier than Gawain Douglas ever thought of calling it anything else but Inglis (English). Till this time when the language of the Scots was referred to, what was meant was Gaelic, or as the old Scotch writers term it, Ersch (Irish). More than thirty years ago Dr J. A. H. Murray, in the treatise already referred to, collected a *catena* of passages from the Scottish writers themselves, showing that the Lowland tongue, "the langage of the northin lede" was regularly described as Inglis. How, then, did the Scottish writers describe the language of their southern neighbours, which, founded as it was upon the Mercian dialect, was now very different from Northumbrian? As *English* was annexed by them as the term for their own tongue, *southron* or *suddron* was all that could be applied to the literary dialect of England. It is interesting to note that even a writer so intensely national as John Knox was twitted by his Roman Catholic opponents as writing a foreign tongue. No doubt long residence out of Scotland, and probably more than all else the English Bible, had considerably influenced Knox's writing in the direction of the literary English of his day. Hence we find Ninian Winzet, in the controversy which he carried on with Knox, declaring "gif 5ou throw curiositie of nouationis hes for5et our auld plane Scottis, quhilk 5our mother lerit 5ou, in tymes cuming I sall wryte to 5ou my mynd in Latin; for I am nocht acqyntit with 5our southeroun." To

"knapp suddron" was insisted upon by other Roman Catholic controversialists as a characteristic of the Scotch Protestant Reformers, who were supported from England.

The earliest form of the Northumbrian dialect known to us has been illustrated by a document on Scottish soil—the Ruthwell cross. Unfortunately the next stage is not so easy to illustrate, as the interlinear glosses of the Gospels, the Lindisfarne and part of the Rushworth, are not a consecutive translation but merely the vernacular meanings of the words written above them, much in the same way as schoolboys in difficulties still write the meanings of hard Latin words between the lines. On the northern side of the Border, however, there is nothing at all parallel to these glosses, which date probably from before the Norman Conquest. The only information indeed that we obtain concerning the English language of the northern kingdom comes from the old Burgh laws, some of which in their Latin form, date from the reign of David I., in other words from the first half of the twelfth century. The Latinist often left technical terms in the vernacular, and Cosmo Innes in the preface to his edition of Barbour collected a considerable number of such phrases. One example may suffice. *Si quis verberando fecerit, aliquem blaa et blodi, ipse qui fuerit blaa et blodi prius debet exaudiri.* The phrase *blaa and blodi* was probably one in very common use. Not only is it found in the much later vernacular version of the law, but appears even in a hymn:—

His sydes full bla and bludy ware,
That sumtyme war full bryghte of blee;
His herte was perchede with a spere;
His bludy woundes was reuthe to see.

But this hymn is no product of Scotland; it belongs to the Yorkshire of the 14th century, and is printed by Professor Horstmann, as possibly a work of Richard Rolle of Hampole, who wrote about 1340 A.D.

In poetry, however, the language is rarely the common spoken language of the date of composition. Poetry gains in dignity and emotional effect from the use of phrases borrowed from earlier poetry or archaic in themselves. Unfortunately, connected prose from the Scottish side of the Border is late in appearing. No doubt it had existed, but the long turmoil of the War of Independence, and the ravages of the English have swept it away with most other traces of the well-being of Scotland prior to the death of Alexander III. Hence the earliest piece of continuous prose, that Cosmo Innes is able to cite, is a precept under

the privy seal of the Earl of Fife, Warden of Scotland, to pass the wool of the monks of Melrose free of custom. It is dated 26 May, 1389.

"Robert, &c., ffor quhy that of gude memore Dauid Kyng quhilom of Scotland that God assoillie wt his chartir vndre his gret seles has gyvin to the religiouse men the abbot and the conuent of Meuros and to thair successours for ever more frely all the custume of all thair wollys as wele of thair awin growing as of thair tendys of thair kyrkes as it apperis be the forsaid chartir confermyt be our mast souereigne and doubtit Lorde and fadre our lorde the Kyng of Scotland Robert that now ys wyth his grete seles &c." (Liber de Melrose No. 480.)

Of more human interest is a letter of George, Earl of Dunbar, which he wrote to Henry IV. of England on 18 February, 1400, and which is given in full in the appendix to Pinkerton's History, vol. i. p. 449. Here need only be quoted the end part, of which Innes obtained a recollection from the document in the British Museum, and of which therefore the dialect forms are certain:—

"And excellent prince syn that I clayme to be of kyn tull yhow, and it peraventour nocht knawen on yhour parte, I schew it to yhour lordschip be this my lettre that gif dame Alice the Bewmount was yhour graunde dame, dame Mariory Comyne, hyrr full sister, was my graunde dame on the tother side, sa that I am bot of the feirde degre of kyn tyll yhow, the quhilk in alde tyme was callit neir. And syn I am in swilk degre tyll yhow I requer yhow as be way of tendirness thareof, and fore my seruice in maner as I hafe before writyn, that yhe will vouchsaf tyll help me and suppowell me tyll gete amendes of the wrangs and the defowle that ys done me, sendand tyll me gif yhow lik yhour answer of this with all gudely haste. And noble prince mervaille yhe nocht that I write my lettres in Engl. fore that ys mare clere to myne vnderstandyng than latyne or franche. Excellent, mychty, and noble prince, the haly Trinitie hafe yhow evermar in kepyng. Writyn at my castell of Dunbarr, the xviii. day of Feuerer.—Le Count de la Marche Descocce."

The doughty earl to whose understanding, as he says, English was more clear than Latin or French, signs himself with a little remnant of the French that was becoming in a scion of so Norman a stock as that which produced Dame Alice the Bewmont and Dame Marjory Comyn. Almost contemporaneous with his letter is the following missive sent by the magistrates of Aberdeen in 1401 to some important personage whose name unfortunately is lost. The letter is printed in Stuart's

Extracts from the Council Register of Aberdeen, a volume issued by the Spalding Club in 1844.

"Reuerence and honour likit yhu to wit, that the lord of Keth arestit yhur wyn and yhur oxin, and for gud causis as he lete ws wit; and for yhur sakis we made him request that he suld frely delyuer thaim, for the quilk request he has delyuerit thaim frely at this tym, for we ar thai at wald at gud acord war betwex yhu and hym, and wil do our besynes to bryng it thar to at our power, at the quilk accord he sayis he wald be gladly and sal nocht leve in his defaute. Qwarfor, der lord, it is our consale, and we requir yhu, that for essay of the contrar and quiet of our place, yhe wald asich gif yhe ocht aw hym, sa that hym nedit nocht in tyme to cum til mak sic punding and namly in our tovn, for he says it is previt dete that yhe aw hym, and of lang tyme by gane; and gif yhe will adreis yhu to be at ony day with hym for the knowlege of the forsaid thyngis sends ws word, and we sal late hym wit, and gif it langs ansuer we sal ger send it yhu, for we ar richt mykil haldyn to yhu, and als til hym. God kepe yhur estate as we desir."

How little this English from north of the Tweed differed from that not far north of the Humber will be clear from the following little homily of Richard Rolle, the hermit of Hampole, on the text of the bee.

Moralia Richardi, heremite de natura apīs, unde quasi apīs argumentosa (Horstmann, Richard Rolle of Hampole (1895), p. 193).

The bee has thre kyndis. Ane es þat scho es neuer ydill, and scho es noghte with thaym þat will noghte wyrke, bot castys thaym owte and puttes thaym awaye. Anothere es þat when scho flyes scho takes erthe in hyr fette, þat scho be noghte with thaym þat will noghte lyghtly ouer-heghede in the ayere of wynde. The thyrde es þat scho kepes clene and brighte hire winges. Thus ryghtwyse men þat lufes god, are neuer in ydyllnes; ffor owthyre þat ere in trauayle, prayand, or thynkande, or redande, or othere gude doande, or withtakand ydill mene and schewand thaym worthy to be put fra þe ryste of heuene ffor þay will noght trauayle here. þay take erthe, þat es þay halde þanselfe vile and erthely that thay be noghte blawene with þe wynde of vanyte and of pryde. Thay kepe thaire wynges clene, that es þe twa commandementes of charyte þay fulfill in gud coneyens, and thay hafe othyre vertus vnblendyde with þe fylthe of syne and unclene luste. Arestotill sais þat þe bees are feghtande agaynes hym þat will drawe paire hony fra thayme. Swa sulde we do agaynes deuells þat afforses thame to reuc fra vs þe hony of poure lufe and of grace. For many are þat neuer

kan halde þe ordyre of lufe ynesche þaire frendys sybbe or ffremmede, bot outhire þay lufe þaym ouer-mekill, settand thaire thoghte vnryght-wysely on thaym ; or þay luf thayme ouer lyttill, yf þay doo noghte all as þay wolde till þame. Swylke kane noghte fyghte for thaire hony, ffor-thy þe deuelle turnes it to wormed and makes þeire saules ofte-sythes full bitter in angwys and tene, and besynes of vayne thoghtes and oþer wrechidness, ffor thay are so heuy in erthely frenchype þat þay may noghte flee in till þe lufe of Ihesu Criste, in þe wylke þay moghte wele for-gaa þe lufe of all creaturs lyfande in erthe."

Here may be noted the most important of the characters which distinguish this from the earlier literary English of the south. They may for convenience be taken in the order of the words as they stand in the passage. They are as follows, the first in each couple being Hampole's word, the other the contemporary southern literary English:—has=hath ; ane=oon, one ; scho=heo ; thaym=hem ; kepes=kepeth ; men þat lufes=men þat lufeth (in the south), men þat lufe (midland) ; (observe that this form is found oftener in relative clauses than in principal sentences ; cp. in modern Buchan *Them at hiz a hantle tae dae* with *They hiv a hantle amo' thir han's*) ; prayand, thynkande, &c.=praying, thynkinge, &c. (since Layamon in the 13th century) ; swylke=swich, wylke (Barbour, or quhilk)=which. Observe also agaynes which still survives in the north without a final t ; for this the southern Middle English is ayeines.

It may not be uninstrusive to compare a sentence from a sermon by John Gaytryge or Gawtry (a follower of Hampole) on the Ten Commandments with the Frisian passage quoted before, in order to see how far the languages, as represented by documents separated in time by less than a century, have diverged. The date is about nine hundred years after the emigration of the Angles to England, and about five hundred after the total isolation of Frisian and English from one another.

"þis tene Comannementis þat er befor rekennede, er vmbylowked in twa of þe gospels ; þe tane es, þat we luf god ouer all thyngs ; þe tothir, þat we luf our eenen-cristene als we do oureselfe. For god aw vs to luf haly with hert, with all our mygth, with all our thogth, with word and with deide. Our eenenecristene als wa aw vs to luf vnto þat ylke gud þat we luf our-self, þat es at say, welesare in body and in saule, and come to þat ylke blysse þat we thynke till." (Horstmann op. cit. p. 109).

At this period the dialect which has ever since remained the literary dialect of England was already taking shape. At first the popularity of

Piers Plowman bid fair to make the literary dialect that of the west, for William Langland its author was a native of the Malvern hills. But a much greater poet arose presently in Geoffrey Chaucer who represented the cultivated speech of London. That speech as the dialect spoken in the three great centres London, Oxford, and Cambridge, was already on the way to become the literary dialect of England. Chaucer did much to strengthen the tendency, which was confirmed by the fact that England produced no author equal in influence to Chaucer for more than a century and a half after his time.

An instructive parallel may be drawn between the English of Wiclif's New Testament as revised by John Purvey, which belongs to this period (the end of the fourteenth century), and a transcription of that translation made in the dialect of Ayrshire, probably by one Murdoch Nisbet, about a hundred years later. This Scottish version has been recently edited by the late Dr T. G. Law for the Scottish Text Society.

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON (Luke xv. 11ff).

WICLIF AND PURVEY, 1388.

And he seide, A man hadde twei sones ;
and the yonger of hem seide to the fadir,
Fadir, geve me the porcioun of catel,
that fallith to me. And he departide to
hem the catel. And not aftir many daies,
whanne alle thingis weren gederid to-
gider, the yonger sone wente forth in
pilgrimage in to a fer cuntre ; and there
he wastide hise goodis in luyunge
lecherously. And aftir that he hadde
endid alle thingis, a strong hungre was
maad in that cuntre, and he bigan to
have nede. And he wente, and drouȝt
him to oon of the citezeyns of that
cuntre. And he sente hym into his town
to fede swyn. And he couetide to fille
his wombe of the coddis that the hoggis
eeten, and no man gaf him. And he
turnede agen to hym self, and seide, Hou
many hirid men in my fadir hous han
plente of loones ; and Y perische here
thorow hungir. Y schal rise vp, and
go to my fadir, and Y schal seie to hym,
Fadir, Y haue synned in to heuene, and
bifor thee ; and now I am not worthi
to be clepid thi sone, make me as oon
of thin hirid men. And he roos vp, and

MURDOCH NISBET, 1520 ?

And he saide, A man had ij sonnys ;
and the yongare of thame said to the
fader, Fader, geue me the porcioun of
substance, that fallis to me. And he
departit to thame the substance. And
nocht mony daies eftir, quhen al thingis
war gaderit togiddir, the yongar sonn
went furth in pilgrimage into a fer
cuntre, and thare he waistit his gudis
in leving licherouslie. And eftir that
he had endit al thingis, a stark hungire
was made in that cuntre ; and he
began to haue need. And he went, and
drew him to aan of the citezenis of that
cuntre ; and he send him into his town
to fede swyne. And he couatit to fill
his wambe of the coddis that the hoggis
ete ; and na man gave to him. And he
turnit agane into him self, and said,
How mony hyretinen in my fadris hous
has plente of launes, and I peryse here
throu hungir. I sal ryse up and ga to
my fadere, and I sal say to him, Fader,
I haue synnyt into heuen and before
thee, and now I am nocht worthie to be
callit thi sonn ; mak me as aan of thi
hyret men. And he rase up, and com

cam to his fadir. And whanne he was sit afer, his fadir saig hym, and was stirrid bi mercy. And he ran, and fel on his necke, and kisside hym. And the sone seide to hym, Fadir, Y haue synned in to heuene, and bifor thee; and now Y am not worthi to be clepid thi sone. And the fadir seide to his seruauantis, Swithe brynge ge forth the firste stoole, and clothe ge hym, and geue ge a ryng in his hoond, and schoon on his feet; and brynge ge a fat calf, and sle ge, and ete we, and make we feeste. For this my sone was deed, and hath lyved azen; he perischid, and is foundun.

to his fader. And quhen he was yit on fer, his fadere saw him, and was mouet bi mercy, and he ran, and fell on his neck, and kissit him. And the sonn said to him, Fader, I haue synnyt into heuen, and before thee, and now I am nocht worthie to be callit thi sonn. And the fadere said to his seruandis, Suythe bring ye furthe the first stole, and cleithe ye him; and geue ye a ryng in his hand, and schoon on his feet; And bring ye a fat calf, and sla ye; and ete we, and mak we feest: For this my sonn was deid, and has leeuat agane; he peryset, and is fundin.

If Murdoch Nisbet, or whoever the translator was, had made a translation for himself from the Vulgate, and not a mere transliteration of Wiclif's version, no doubt he might have used here and there a somewhat different vocabulary. As it is, however, he has made correctly such changes in form as were necessary to render his version a really Scottish version. He has changed the pronoun *hem* to *thame*, the present tense *fallith* to *fallis*, and the past tenses *in-de* into past tenses *in-t* (*couetide*, *couatit*), he has introduced the characteristic third plural *hyret men has*, while Wiclif keeps the old *han*; Wiclif has made the change of *āu* into *oon*, of *lāues* into *looues*, but the Scotch transliterator has restored the old forms which mark the distinction between the dialects to this day; he has put in *send* as the past tense, a form which long survived his time. But even at this comparatively late date some characteristics of modern Scots do not appear in it. Most marked of all northern peculiarities to an Englishman of our day is the loss of final *l* after *a* and *u* in *ba'*, *fa'*, *fou*, *pu'*, etc., and the change of *ol* into *ow*, so that *roll* appears as *row*, *poll* as *pow*, and the like. In the passage quoted, as it happens, there is not much to illustrate these peculiarities but we find *al* in *endit al things* where modern Scotch dialects would put *a' thing*. And this brings us face to face with one of the great difficulties of the literary language of Scotland throughout the sixteenth century and later. Eccentricities of spelling, or what appear to us as such, were at an earlier period attempts, no doubt often imperfect, to represent phonetically the sounds which the writer intended to express. But now we come to a period where the spelling had begun to deviate considerably from the pronunciation. The history of "Middle Scots," as this period in the language is called, is a large and difficult subject, into

which I do not propose to enter. It is enough to say that the language of a large part of its literature, and especially of its prose literature, was couched in a phraseology which was employed only by literary men familiar with French and with Latin and was unknown or, if known, unintelligible to the general. The best known example of this is the strange and interesting work known as the *Complaynt of Scotland* and dating from 1549 A.D. From the period of the Reformation, and naturally with greater acceleration after the Union of the Crowns in 1603 A.D., the literary language of Scotland became assimilated to that of England. The prose writers commanded a larger audience by appealing to an English as well as to a Scottish public. The poets found the English vocabulary on occasion very convenient for providing rhymes. Hence a large part of the literature on which Scotland most prides herself is written only in a bastard Scots which is more than half "southron." This charge has often been made, and with truth, against Burns. It has been less noticed that, nearly seventy years earlier, Allan Ramsay had recognised the truth of the criticism and gloried in what some of his contemporaries would have thought his shame. Even the most fanatical of Scotchmen could not say more in praise of his native tongue than does "honest Allan" in the preface to his poems.

"That I have exprest my thoughts in my native dialect, was not only inclination, but the desire of my best and wisest friends; and most reasonable, since good imagery, just similies, and all manner of ingenious thoughts, in a well-laid design, disposed into numbers, is poetry.—Then good poetry may be in any language.—But some nations speak rough, and their words are confounded with a multitude of hard consonants, which makes the numbers unharmonious. Besides, their language is scanty, which makes a disagreeable repetition of the same words. There are no defects in ours; the pronunciation is liquid and sonorous, and much fuller than the *English*, of which we are masters, by being taught it in our schools, and daily reading it; which being added to all our own native words, of eminent significancy, makes our tongue by far the completest; for instance, I can say, *an empty house, a toom barrel, a boss-head, and a hollow-heart.*"

This is bringing the mountain to Mahomet with a vengeance, but nevertheless Ramsay's statement faithfully represents the practice pursued by himself and all his poetical successors from then till now.

The practice in prose was somewhat different. During the greater part of the eighteenth century, in Edinburgh at least, persons of education

really employed two dialects. What Ramsay of Ochtertyre says of Lord Kames, will illustrate this. "The language of his social hour was pure Scots, nowise like what he spoke on the bench, which approached to English. In all probability he used the same words, phrases, and articulations which the friends and companions of his younger years made use of in their festive hours, when people's hearts knit to one another. Nevertheless there was nothing mean or disgusting in his phraseology or tone." Here we have clearly Dandie Dinmont's counsellor, Mr Pleydell, brought before us. But that the character survived even into the nineteenth century could be plentifully illustrated from Cockburn's Memoirs. How far even the common dialect has changed in a century and a half may be seen from Lord Kames' remark that to hear the sound written *z* in the names Mackenzie and Menzies pronounced like an English *z*, was enough to turn his stomach. Though Menzies has been successful in retaining its original sound, there are probably no districts now where Mackenzie is pronounced in the old way as *Mackingie*, and probably few persons living who have heard it so pronounced except as an intentional archaism.

But what of the language of the common folk through all these centuries? As we have seen, the Saxon language in Scotland had in different areas different substrata. These substrata of extinguished languages are to some extent reflected in the counties of the mainland outside the Highland line by differences in the Scots spoken in them. Thus the dialect of Galloway and Dumfries differs markedly from that in the adjacent counties of Selkirk, Peebles, and Roxburgh. The dialect of the Lothians many centuries since extended itself over most of Fife. The ancient Strathclyde represented by northern Ayrshire, Lanark, Renfrew, and Dumbarton has a dialect of its own. Perthshire outside the Highland line has a dialect which encroaches to some extent on Fife and Forfar. From this the dialect of Angus and the Mearns is distinct as it is also from that spoken outside the Highland line from Aberdeen to Inverness. In Caithness, Norse and Gaelic have both had to give way to a dialect similar to, though not identical with that of Aberdeenshire. The dialect of Aberdeenshire is upon the area which once was Pictish. So is that of Angus and the Mearns. Why then are not the dialects identical? There are no linguistic elements in the one which are not in the other. The chief and perhaps the only cause for the difference is the isolation

produced by geographical barriers.* The Grampians and the river Dee prevented much communication except by sea, and each district has consequently gone "its ain gait" in the matter of language. The differences are mainly, though not altogether phonetic, and a comparative study of the history of their sounds would make it tolerably clear how the differences arose. Every community which is well marked off from its neighbours by geographical boundaries tends to develop a dialect of its own. Even in the area in which the Aberdeenshire or "Broad Buchan" is spoken, there are a considerable number of sub-divisions with special characteristics. The late Dr Gregor distinguished three sub-dialects in Banffshire. In Aberdeenshire, Buchan proper can be distinguished in dialect from the Garioch and from Mar, while all three are different from the dialect in the city of Aberdeen. The differences are matters of phonetics and vocabulary which the greater facilities for movement from one district to another, and the levelling effects of education have already almost entirely obliterated in the rural districts, the dialect of which, however, remains distinct from that of the city.

The dialect spoken in the north-eastern corner from the Dee to Inverness is well deserving of investigation by reason of its peculiarities, and also by reason of the large amount of literature which has been produced in the area with at least some traces of the local characteristics. To this region belongs the first important work extant in any Scottish dialect—Barbour's *Bruce*. It might even be possible to urge a *prima facie* claim to the earliest lyric extant in Scots. Its two stanzas are well known and have been handed down in a variety of forms. The first of these runs thus in Laing's edition of Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle* ii., 266:—

Quhen Alexandyr our King wes dede

That Scotland led in luve and le,

Away wes sons off ale and bred,

Of wyne and wax, off gamyn and gle.

The scansion of the verse shows clearly that Alexandyr here could not have been pronounced like the modern Alexander, because it can have

* There is, however, some evidence to show that even in Pictish times Angus and Mearns were differentiated from Aberdeen.

only three syllables. The pronunciation must in fact have been something like Alshiner, and in Buchan the last generation spoke of a man whose name was Alexander Alexander as Sanners Elshiner. Nor is this a recent change in Aberdeenshire, for Alzenor, Elshenour, Alshonour, (the two last of the same person) are all found in Aberdeen documents of the sixteenth century. But the change was possibly not confined to this area.

Of far greater importance, however, is Barbour's Bruce because of its extent and also of its indisputably northern origin. The date of John Barbour's birth is not certain, but he died an old man in 1395. He was, therefore, probably born somewhere about 1320, possibly, as most authorities think, some years later. By 1358 he was archdeacon of Aberdeen and from the numerous references to him in extant documents, it is clear that not only was he a capable churchman as the "bishop's eye" ought to be, but also a scholar and a statesman. The history of the Bruce, which alone is preserved to us, was only part of his literary work. A mythical history called the Brut, tracing the descent of British sovereigns from Brutus a descendant of Aeneas, and an equally mythical metrical history of the family of Stewart we know to have been written by him, but both are lost. The contents of the first were no doubt much like those of the earlier English poem of the same name by Layamon; the contents of the second are preserved for us in Hector Boece's Latin prose translated into the vernacular by another archdeacon, John Bellenden, archdeacon of Murray and canon of Ross. This translation was made for the benefit of James V., who, we are told elsewhere, was "nocht perfyte in Latin toung."

As Barbour was in all probability a native of Aberdeen we might expect in his work traces of the local dialect. There is no evidence that in his time there was a standard form of the Scots tongue differing from that of Aberdeen, and considering how the dialect of the North East had spread from the South, the development of marked differences at so early a period is improbable. But unfortunately we do not possess the manuscript as written by Barbour himself. The two extant copies were both written by the same scribe, John de Ramsay, more than a hundred years after 1375 when the work was composed, and the scribe undoubtedly adapted spelling and forms to the manner of his own age and his own dialect. The greater part of Barbour's language is still quite intelligible to Aberdonians, but the majority of the words which appear to them specially characteristic of north-east Scotland are

words which can be traced back to Anglo-Saxon, though in literary English of modern times they may have died out. For the characteristic *f* instead of *wh* in *fa* "who," *far* "where" *fan* "when," *fup* "whip," etc., Barbour gives no help. Nor is there any trace of the loss general throughout Scotland of *ll* in *all*, *pull*, etc. Possibly these changes had not yet come in, though the latter, as we shall see presently, had certainly appeared in some situations soon after the date of the writing of our existing manuscripts in 1487 and 1489.

A still larger body of verse, which has been wrongly connected with Barbour, is to be found in the Legends of the Saints preserved in a manuscript in the Cambridge University Library. That they are of northern origin is shown by the fact that, of the only two Scottish saints included, St Machar, whose fame is entirely connected with Aberdeen, is one. St Ninian also, the other Scottish saint, though most closely connected with Galloway, had his festival specially observed in Aberdeen, as the Aberdeen Breviary shows. Moreover it is easy to see the reason for the introduction of St Machar, though apparently it has escaped the attention of the editors. The writer of the collection had been engaged on the life of St Nicholas, who, though born at Patara in Lycia, was very popular in many countries including Russia and England where a very large number of churches are dedicated to him. The great church of Aberdeen is St Nicholas, and the editor of the collection naturally passed from the saint of the new to the saint of the old town—St Machar, to whom the church preceding the present cathedral and the cathedral itself were dedicated. As two passages of 21 and 34 lines respectively are common to the legends of St Machar and St Ninian, it seems probable that the original, whence the present collection was drawn, contained no legend of St Machar, but that the local editor or translator inserted it as interesting to his readers. As Dr Metcalfe, the editor for the Scottish Text Society says, the dialect forms are not clear proof of origin in Aberdeen, nor in any other definite area. We have, however, no reason to suppose that this MS. is anything more than a fifteenth century copy of an older collection, so that we have the same difficulty about transcription as in the case of Barbour. There is, however, one interesting point in the legend of Mary of Egypt (xviii.) which is the most carefully finished of the whole collection. Here we are told (1148) that the monk who conversed in the wilderness with Mary of Egypt.

leite þat haly tyme ga by
till þat feris thur[s]day come nere.

The text of the second line is uncertain. The MS. seems to read *theris furday* and Dr Metcalfe in his glossary reads *feris fursday*, i.e., Holy Thursday or Maundy Thursday. The word *feris*, however, is probably a misreading of the word *schir*, regularly applied to the Thursday preceding Good Friday, which this Thursday is. In any case, the initial *f* of *furday*, if it may be trusted, when combined with other proofs, strengthens the claim of Aberdeen to be the home of the collection, and is the earliest example of this well known dialect change.

Between this early literature and the modern dialect literature in "Broad Buchan" there is a gap of centuries. Before we come to the plentiful literature of the last two centuries, we find that the peculiarities of the dialect are stereotyped much in their present form. The earliest known literary reference to the peculiarities of "Broad Buchan" is in Dr Archibald Pitcairne's satire of "The Assembly or Scotch Reformation," written in 1692. I quote from a note of Dr Joseph Robertson's in his *Collections for a History of Aberdeen and Banff* (Spalding Club, 1843) p. 73, Pitcairne's volume not being contained in any library accessible to me. But a friend has collated Robertson's quotations with a copy of the original in the Advocates' Library, and assures me that the note is accurate and contains practically all the phrases that imitate or parody the "Broad Buchan." The remarks are put into the mouth of "Laird Littlewit, a north-country man," and are as follows: "Cleense out the keerates, that the gospel may be preached; let that be first deene." . . . "I jeedge it guid, and for sekeerity of the protestant religion, that na keerate get leave to sett his fitt within this bigging." . . . "But see the doors be nae opened to him." . . . "Fat ha' they deen? If that be true, we are but a beik of bees without stangs." . . . "If we be nae itherways sekeered, bot be the claim of right, we've a cald coal to blau at; I wad anes see to sekeere the quintra frae free quarters, and a' the rest of the abeeses mentioned in't; and then we may expect sume guid o't; but, guid seeth, moderator, Sir William Littlelaw had nae a's wits about him fan that claim was drawn, and sae's seen o't the day, for they say he takes fits." . . . "A wast quintra believer, moderator, can teach better than ony keerate i' the north, and they'll seen learn to gi' the com-meenion."

Apart from Barbour's Bruce and the Legends of the Saints, the poetry of the North East of Scotland has been almost exclusively lyrical and, with some notable exceptions, even its lyrics have not enjoyed more than a local reputation. Moreover, even the best productions in

this kind, with rare exceptions, are uncertain guides to the dialect, because there are manifest attempts to assimilate the language to that of writers in the south of Scotland, and secondly, because, like other Scotch versifiers, the authors never hesitate to use an English word more or less disguised by spelling, or an English construction, where either appears to be more convenient than the words or phrases of the native dialect. These characteristics have become more accentuated within the last century through the influence of Burns, though Allan Ramsay, as we have seen, was a conscious sinner in this respect. How it affected the best of Buchan song writers can easily be seen in the difference between John Skinner's *Monymusk Christmas Ba'ing*, which was written not later than 1738, and his other pieces. Yet even the title of this is conventional Scots, since the Aberdeenshire dialect had never had an ending in *-ing* for words of the type of *Ba'ing*, which ought to be *Ba'in*. And among the songs there is a well marked gradation in dialect quality. The *Ewie wi' the crookit horn* approaches closely to the spoken dialect and the comparative purity of dialect seen in the *Christmas Ba'ing*; *Tullochgorum* has a greater English element in it and *John of Badenyon* a still greater than *Tullochgorum*. No doubt the difference is one rather of writing than of pronunciation. Could we have heard those charming daughters who, as Skinner writes to Burns in November, 1787, "being all tolerably good singers, plagued me for words to some of their favourite tunes, and so extorted those effusions which have made a public appearance beyond my expectations and contrary to my intentions," we should probably have found that often where the written word was Anglicised, the spoken word was in no way different from that of other inhabitants of Linshart.

A much more faithful representation of local peculiarities is to be found in *Ajax his speech to the Grecian Knabbs attempted in broad Buchans* by R. F. Gent, which was first published in 1742. The author of this, which is a translation of part of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book xiii., was a Buchan man named Robert Forbes who was a hosier in London. The author, in a poetical *shop bill* printed at the end of the Edition of 1754, the earliest which I have seen, gives us this information himself:

I likewise tell you by this bill
That I do live upo' Towerhill
Hard by the house o' Robie Mill,
just i' the nuik,
Ye canna' mist when 'ere you will,
the sign's a buik.

In Chalmers' life of Ruddiman we are told that the grammarian and printer, when this translation was read to him "in the vulgar dialect of Buchan, declared it the best, that had ever been made." Ruddiman ought to have been a good judge, for he was a native of Boyndie in Banffshire. That he meant what he said is shown by the fact vouched for by Chalmers that the edition of 1754, which has no printer's name, was printed by his firm and the glossary supplied by Walter Ruddiman his nephew.

Robert Forbes is not much of a poet. If he had been, he probably would have selected a more poetical author than Ovid from whom to translate. Like most translators he is occasionally hampered by the difficulty of putting his author into the vernacular. Thus he can perpetrate a verse like the following which in its versification savours of the Scotch version of the Psalms at its worst :

The staik indeed is unco' great,
I will confess alway,
But, name Ulysses to it anes,
The worth quite dwines away.

It must be acknowledged, however, that this is also Forbes's worst. Sometimes, as in the following lines, he is spirited enough, however little poetical, though perhaps after a hundred and sixty years occasionally not altogether intelligible to everybody even in Buchan :

Fan he spang'd out, rampag'd an' said
That nane amon' us a'
Durst venture out upo' the lone,
Wi' him to shak' a fa' ;
I dacker'd wi' him by mysel',
Ye wish't it to my kavel,
An' gin ye speer fa' got the day,
We parted on a nevel.

More poetical, though less satisfactory as a representative of the dialect, is the contemporary author of a book which once had a great vogue in the north eastern counties of Scotland—Helenore or the Fortunate Shepherdess. Alexander Ross was a native of Aberdeenshire, having been born in the parish of Kincardine O'Neil in the year 1699. For more than fifty years of his long life he made his home in Lochlee on the Forfar side of the Grampians where, as long as strength lasted, he was schoolmaster. According to Rev. Harry Stuart of Oathlaw, the story of Lindy and Nory, as it was familiarly named, was originally

written in English and, by the advice of a wise friend, metamorphosed into Scots before publication. If this be so, and there seems no reason to doubt Mr Stuart's evidence, the poem must have been considerably altered in the process and the introduction distinctly suggests that it was modelled upon Allan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*. Dr Longmuir the most careful of the editors of *Helenore* has some doubts where to place its dialect. "As to the language, it is said to be 'the broad Scotch,' although it is neither the language of Ramsay nor Burns, neither is it what is known as the Buchan dialect, which may be regarded as the broadest in Scotland. . . . it is, in short, the ordinary dialect of the people whom he has so successfully represented." This appears to mean that Dr Longmuir supposed the dialect to have been that of the people of Glenesk. If so the dialect then must have approached that of Aberdeenshire more closely than it is said to do now. In the introduction *Scota* lays her command upon the bard in these terms :

Speek my ain leed, 'tis guced auld Scots I mean,
 Your soudland gnaps I count not worth a princ.
 We've words a-fourth, we well can ca' our ain,
 Tho' frae them sair my bairns now refrain,
 But are to my guced auld proverb confeeirin',
 Neither guced fush nor flesh, nor yet salt herrin'.
 Gin this ye do, and lyn your ryme wi' sense,
 But ye'll mak friends of fremmit fouk, fa kens?
 With thir injunctions ye may set ye doon.

The phrase *fa kens?* locates the dialect on the Highland border, for in the other counties of Scotland *wh* at the beginning of a word does not become *f*. But south of the Grampians the word for *good* is not *guced* as here but *güd*, with the same modified *u* sound as in the Forfarshire pronunciation of *shoon*, *moon*, etc. The pronunciation *gweed*, *sheen*, *meen*, is characteristic of the area north of the Grampians. On the other hand though a very large number of northern documents employ the pronoun *thir*, it is doubtful how far it was native and, if native, how early it disappeared in the spoken language. In all probability it was not in use north of the Grampians in Ross' lifetime. No less doubtful is it whether he had any authority other than the literary *quh-* for a form beginning with *f* to represent the southern *whom*, as in the line—

They wistna fum to send upon the chase.

Ross apparently had doubts on the subject, himself, for in the second edition he removed most of the examples.

We may conclude, in short, that the characteristic forms found in Helenore belong to Aberdeenshire, but that a large part of the language is founded upon literary models, partly Scotch and partly English.

Of more modern versifiers the most trustworthy is *The Goodwife at Home*, a poem which was obviously intended to illustrate the vocabulary of north-west Aberdeenshire without reference to other linguistic characters, but which nevertheless has not a single rhyme in it that is drawn from southern Scots or from English. It was the work of Mrs Allardyce, the wife of a former minister of the parish of Forgue, and as a dialect source is full of interest.

If we turn, now, to our prose sources we shall find difficulties of a similar kind. It is unnecessary to consider here the literary prose already mentioned, of John Bellenden, because, though archdeacon of Moray, he probably came from the south of Scotland, and because his translations, being made for the benefit of King James V., would no doubt in any case be as free as possible from dialect characteristics unfamiliar to the King. Our documents are therefore more of a business nature; the records of the Courts and Councils of Aberdeen, Elgin, and Banff, and the contents of charter chests, so far as these records are not in Latin but in the vernacular. The oldest piece of continuous prose known to me, which belongs to the dialect area and is not connected with the City of Aberdeen, is a document published by Cosmo Innes in 1848 in the Spalding Club volume entitled "The Family of Kiltravock." The document which is dated "at Elgin, the xv dai of the moneth of Fevryere, the yere of our Lord a thousand four hundir twenti and twa yere," is curious enough in point of contents. It is a formal release given by Thomas, Earl of Murray to John Hay, of Lochloy, from an agreement made by the Earl with John's father that John should wed a daughter of the Earl. The other terms of the original bargain are duly set forth, but upon representations of Donald,thane of Cawdor, that John desires to marry a daughter of his instead, the Earl magnanimously declares, "we relesche you, dischargis you, and quite-clemis you for ever, giffand and grantand to you our counsale, our licence, fredom, and gude will to spouse and til haf to your wife, the douchter of the saide Donald, thayne of Caldor, with sic fredomes, profitis, and rewardis, as war forspokin in our first connandis, togidder with our help, suppouel, and manetenance in al your lachful and leveful erandis in al tyme to cum." The whole document, however, is couched in such legal phraseology, that it is clearly no work

of the Earl's own hand, but in all probability of some lawyer churchman unconnected with the district.

Of the numerous "bonds of manrent" from the north-east of Scotland the same may be said. The oldest of them, by which "James of Forbes, sone and ayer apperande of my derrest fadir, schir Alexander of Forbes, knycht" binds himself to be the man of "Alexander of Setoune of Gordon," is amongst the Gordon papers printed in the Spalding Club Miscellany, vol. iv., and dates from 1444. All such bonds follow a definite model, no doubt derived from Edinburgh. Even after the lapse of more than a century the form remains the same, as can be seen from other documents.

In the records of the town councils there is greater freedom, or, as a contemporary would probably have called it, greater carelessness. From them we shall consequently be able to glean more of what was actually uttered at the time. On the other hand the court records manifest a legal rigidity, which is all the greater, the less the clerk knows. In the literary language of the sixteenth century it was usual to put the plural ending to adjectives as well as substantives. Thus *the saidis persouns* would be the correct literary idiom. This was also adopted by the law courts, from the Latin documents of which it may have originally emerged, for there is no evidence that it was a popular idiom. No doubt after the establishment of the Court of Session in 1532, the minor courts modelled their phraseology upon that of the High Court. Hence in the earliest court records of Elgin, which date from 1540, we find *the saidis* continually recurring. But it is clear that the clerk of court had no idea what it meant, since he uses it of a single person, as when Agnes (or, as he spells it, Angnes) Baldon appeared before the court for hitting Katerine Falconer with a stone "and drawing bluid and als for the mane-ssing of the saidis Katerine with ane rung" (Cramond, *Records of Elgin*, i. p. 49.) But in the very next line he writes "the said Katerine."

From the court and council documents we learn that from the very beginning of the sixteenth century changes had taken place in the sound of certain syllables containing *l*. Thus in the Sheriff Court records of Aberdeen, recently edited for the Spalding Club by Dr Littlejohn, we are told in an entry for May 17, 1505, that "Andro Elison had *stowin* ane gray hors," where we have already a still surviving form developed alongside *ane* before a consonant, which is a literary mannerism never recognised in popular speech. Yet in an entry for 1503 we still find *bollis of aits*, though now *bows* is as much part of the dialect as

stowin. But in 1543, at Elgin, the clerk still wrote *stollin*, and it is 1576 before I note *stowin* at Elgin. The stereotyped spelling *bolliis* long survived, and it is 1591 before the Town Clerk of Aberdeen, Thomas Mollisone, annoyed at the negligence of his predecessors, informs us that before 1380 there were no volumes of records but "scrowis on parchment, . . . written in Latyne all, and for ilk year ane skrow." By then, no doubt, not only *scroll* but all similar words, had long been made to end in *ow* in pronunciation. Yet Thomas Mollisone still writes *all*, though that word, no doubt, in vulgar parlance was *a'*, and as early as 1509 we find Bawblair for Balblair, and in 1541 William Haw (for Hall) at Elgin, for which Pitcairn's Criminal Trials has a similar instance as early as 1501. In 1541 a certain David Gaw or Ga figures much in the Elgin courts. His name is the same as the modern Gall. In the records of both Aberdeen and Elgin, the greatest ingenuity is expended on the spelling of the word *tolbooth*. In 1462 we still find it spelt in Aberdeen, *tolbuith*; in 1598 we find an entry "for mending the quheills and extre of the towbuithe knok" (the wheels and axle of the tolbooth clock). In 1540 the clerk of court at Elgin writes *towbooth* and *tolbowyht* (the latter, as he imagined, the aristocratic spelling) in the same paragraph, and on the next page *torbowyht*. It is clear that by the middle of the sixteenth century, the word was far on its way to the *towbeeth* of later times.

The writing of *f* instead of *wh*—or, as Scotch scribes wrote it, *quh*—was obviously regarded as vulgar, and is not easy to find. One somewhat doubtful example of *f* for *th* we have already found for the fifteenth century in the Legends of the Saints. The same word is found in the records of Elgin for March 4, 1541: "the next lawday eftir Schyir furisday." Walter Cullen, reader in St. Nicholas Church of Aberdeen, in the second half of the sixteenth century, generally shows his scholarship by writing his Chronicle of Aberdeen in the literary dialect. But in 1576 he notes that "on Furisday, the sewint day of October, it blow (*sic*) at the soithest of woynnd and weytt, that the lyk was not sein in mony yeris afor." This writer regularly uses the literary *quha* and *quhair* for the relative pronoun and conjunction, although the relative in all Scottish spoken dialects is really *at*, which is also found in the literature occasionally from Barbour downwards. A typical example of English written as Scots' phrase "Scots wha hae," which in the Buchan pronunciation ought to be *Scots at hie*. This is one of the Norse peculiarities of the dialect which Northern English shares. It is only when Walter Cullen has been excited by seeing his sovereign, King James VI.,

that we ascertain that the dialect form for *where* began with an *f*: "The fyrst tyme that I, Walter Cullen, reder of Aberdeen, sehite (not Scots, but well-known to English visitors in the mouths of rustics who wish to talk "properly") his graice, was the xx day of the said monett of June, 1580 yeris, and that at the woid of Fetteresso, he beand at the huntis with sertane of his lordis; and thaireftir I paist to Dunnottar, *fair* I beheld his grace at his supar, quhill he paist to his chalmer." The spelling, which uses arbitrarily *u*, *v*, and *w* for the same vowel or consonant, makes it impossible to trace the history of the characteristic *v* in *wrang*, *vrat*, *vrang*, *vricht*, and many other words, where *w* and *r* are found in combination.

Even at an earlier time we learn from the records of Elgin that the plural of *calf* was *cair*, the modern *car*, which is interesting as a survival of the original English plural, found with a second suffix in Wiclif's *calver-en*.

These examples will show how it is only from the occasional negligence of our northern scribes that the historical development of the dialect can be ascertained. They generally take the greatest care to conceal its characteristics. In the smaller townships less care was exercised than in the larger. Hence in the latter part of the sixteenth century more can be gleaned from the records of Elgin than from those of Aberdeen, in the seventeenth more from those of Banff than from either of the other more important burghs. From the end of the sixteenth century onwards the writers of prose literature steadily eschewed, so far as they were able, all dialect peculiarities. In the eighteenth century interest in the dialect was awakened and Robert Forbes the author of the *Speech to the Grecian Knabbs* presents us in *A Journal from London to Portsmouth* with a specimen of such prose as Buchan farmers used about 1700, for it is pretty clear that Forbes's language represents a somewhat older period than his own. Only a few of the words he uses are unintelligible to the older generation of living Buchan men, and he preserves a considerable number of words and phrases that were often on the lips of the country folk though but seldom committed to writing.

In the nineteenth century the dialect has found a much larger number of interested enquirers and most of the local newspapers have not unfrequently excellent specimens of rural colloquies. But by far the best representation both of the dialect and of rural manners is to be found in the works of the late Dr William Alexander—*Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk* and *Life among my ain folk*. Wherever dialect is studied

scientifically these books are recognised as the standard authority for Aberdeenshire. And justly so ; for though, in imagination, George Macdonald attains higher flights than ever William Alexander attempted, and can write admirable Aberdeenshire Scots when he pleases, he cannot be trusted to confine himself to the dialect. The objection which was made to Christopher North's *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life*, that "all his elders were fit to be ministers," applies with even more truth to George Macdonald, and consequently his characters wander into lofty regions, whither the pawky and "hame ower" Aberdeenshire dialect is unable to accompany them.

In a paper already of great length it is impossible to catalogue in detail the characteristics of a dialect so peculiar and so different from literary English as is the Broad Buchan. To the southron both sound and syntax are alike strange. Is a sentence like "The quynie coudna be on-grutten," intelligible anywhere outside the north-east corner of Scotland ? "The little girl couldn't help crying" seems, to a Buchan man, but a faint reflection of the meaning. The history of this curious usage of the past participle is still unwritten. Even in the great Dialect Dictionary recently completed, though a similar phrase occurs amongst the examples, I have not been able to find that any attention has been devoted to the idiom or any explanation offered. Other usages of the negatived past participle can be traced back to the sixteenth century, but this was more colloquial and therefore harder to trace in documents of any kind. Yet it is highly desirable that these and many other points of dialect usage should be collected and recorded before it is too late. The dialect vocabulary is rapidly disappearing ; now that the Education Department has appointed an itinerant instructor in English sounds, presumably the next generation will lose the dialect pronunciation also.

Of external influences upon the popular language, there is little room to speak. As has been already said, the ornate and rhetorical phraseology of Middle Scots literature never reached the common folk. Yet even their language was not without a sprinkling of words taken over from French or from Latin. The influence of France, as represented in a book like Francisque Michel's, is greatly exaggerated, many of his derivations of common words being obviously wrong. But the influence of France in refinements of the dinner table is visible enough in servit, ashet, jigot of mutton and others. Of these the first occurs in the inventory of the rags and tatters that Bishop Gordon's servants did not

think it worth while to carry off in 1519—"Item vij seruatis of lynning, of þame iij. riffin."

The influence of Latin was greater rather than less as compared with French. For boys, secondary education, as it would be called nowadays, consisted almost entirely in a good knowledge of Latin. Till well into the nineteenth century, the University awarded its entrance scholarships practically upon the ability to turn a piece of English into idiomatic Latin. Even in side schools a show was made of talking Latin till at least the second quarter of the nineteenth century. As late as 1830, a worthy who kept a little school at Techmuiry, and taught his pupils in a "sleeved waistcoat," expected them to ask permission in Latin to leave the room. *Licet exire* was the formula which probably comprised most of his Latin. A decade later the schoolmaster of the Cäbrach was found reading the Schoolmen by the light of a fir candle. To the influence of these old schoolmasters, true successors of the old scholars of the middle ages, not a few words in Buchan are owing. The word *dominie* itself, which is widely spread, is only the vocative of *dominus* used correctly in addressing the schoolmaster, for the *dominus* or B.A., had to give practical proof of skill in teaching and punishing too, before he was promoted to the rank of *magister* or M.A. Hence where the *Dominie* is found, generally is to be found the *pandie* also, for *pande* (sc. *manum*), the dominie's exclamation preliminary to administering castigation. But the Latin words in dialect come not from this side of learning only. In Buchan the English name of the plant coltsfoot is altogether unknown; it is *tussilago* or *tussilago* and nothing else, though this name seems to have escaped the dictionaries.

Of the old Keltic words, *oy* "grandchild" is one of the few which have reached the literature. In the spoken language there is a considerable number, though they form but a small proportion of the total vocabulary.

But this paper is on the making of the mother tongue and not its present day condition, to which if time and health, and above all the patience of the Club allow, it may be possible some day to return.

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ERRATA.

p. 6, line 4, *read* occupation.

p. 24, line 12 from bottom, *for* winge5 *read* wingez.

p. 24, line 11 from bottom, *for* pat ere *read* pay ere.

p. 24, line 5 from bottom, *read* concyens.

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